A POETICAL EPISTLE FROM A LOUSE TO *PETER PINDAR*, Esq;

OR,

The LOUSE banished from COURT.

Majores majora sonent; mihi parva locuto
Sufficit, in vestras sæpe redire manus.

Martial.

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M.DCC.LXXXVII.

A

POETICAL EPISTLE

FROM A

L O U S E

TO

BRITISH MUSEUM

The LOUSE banished from COURT.

A

POETICAL EPISTLE, &c.

DEAR Peter! your obedient Louſe,
An exile from his father's houſe;
With tendereſt thoughts his little breaſt,
And deepeſt gratitude impreſt;
A thouſand thanks returning ſends,
For all your cares for ſelf and friends.—

Oh! how my wife would joy to meet you,
And with a close embrace to greet you;
In love my creeping offspring join
And 'midst your laurels long to twine.
Since we by fate have met again,
The pleasure's doubled by the pain;

For separation ne'er can alter
A Louse's mind, or make him falter
In truth, or loyalty or love;
Which one day I may hope to prove.—
Oh! what a tender feeling mind,
You shew'd for me and all my kind!
How tragically sung my fate,
When falling on the M-n---'s plate;

At parting with my infant race,

No kiſs, no conſort's laſt embrace!

With what concern my caſe you painted,

How falling on my back I fainted!

My legs and arms uplifted riſe,

Invoking all the deities!—

Till fear, a paſſion all commend,

The man's, as well as Louſe's friend,—

Rouſed all my powers, and bade me fly,

The fury of the M-n---'s eye.—

But ah! in vain I pant for flight;

To ſcreen me from his lowering ſight;

In keen ſenſations now I linger,

Between the M-n---'s thumb and finger.

But while he gave with quiv'ring lip
His ſtern command, I gave a ſlip.—
O, the curſed itch, for foreign travel,
And diſtant wonders to unravel!
More fatal to a race ſo frail,
Than iv'ry comb, or matron's nail!
Which led me from my native home,
And bade me mount the lofty dome;
From which I threw my eyes around,
And trembled at the abyſs profound:
But ſtill by dangers grown more curious,
As men by blows become more furious;
Led to the mountain's utmoſt ſide,
And on ſome trembling hair aſtride;

Too far I ventured to return,
My raſh imprudence doom'd to mourn;
Till by ſome ſhock, convulſive hurl'd,
I fell to range another world.
So Vulcan from the realms above,
Was tumbled by Olympian Jove:
But ſwift deſcending on a ſtone,
Unfortunately broke a bone:
Had Jove but willed, as he was able,
For him like me, to have ſpread a table;
Or plunged him in ſome heap of mortar,
He had not come off one leg ſhorter:
But had like me, ſqueak'd, gave a curſe,
And thank'd the gods, it was no worſe.

Dear

Dear Peter, if, as poets ſing,
Matter is ever on the wing,
Through various forms, the ſelf ſame thing,
A Louſe may one day be a King:
Then, Peter, fit thy lips to ſmack,
Not wine of Helicon, but ſack:
And by the ſhade of my old gran'num,
I'll add an hundred pounds per annum;
Tom ſhall turn out, 'tis my decree,
And *thou* my Laureat ſhall be.
But will not riches, records ſhew it,
Will they not, Peter, ſpoil the poet?
At ſight of theſe, Apollo flies,
And all the imagination dies.—

The

The muſe but hears a guinea chime,
And ſtraight forgets all thoughts of rhyme.—
Clio will drop her mellow flute,
And leave the ſtupid poet mute;
No more Calliope inſpire
The tuneful voice, or ſweep the lyre.
A golden dream the fancy chears,
But when the glittering hoard appears,
Erato with her ſiſter muſes,
Begins to feign and form excuſes.—
Ah! Peter, give the poet riches,
Or clothe the ſuppliant Scot with breeches,
Pleas'd with the boon, he ſoon contemns,
His bagpipes, country, and his friends.

Dear

Dear Peter, didſt thou know a biſhop
A pretty poem ever diſh up?
Of rhyme they know no more than aſſes,
Or, what at Convocation paſſes;
To Parliament their ſenſe confin'd,
To know the Premier's nod and mind.—
Dear maſter Peter, place and penſion,
Deſtroy the ſource of all invention:
Oxonians cry out with a curſe,
That *Tom* is altered for the worſe.
Should I thee, Peter, Laureat name,
Bankrupt in wit as well as fame;
Genius would fly at ſight of caſh,
And e'en thy ſterling ſenſe be traſh.—

Lo!

Lo! I a Louſe, who liv'd in ſtate,
And all the ſplendor of the great;
Who many a favourite courtier's head
O'relook'd, and ſmil'd, at what he ſaid;
Proud, arrogant, and fond of ſhow,
Addreſſing ſcarcely thoſe below;
Pleas'd with thoſe idle pompous things,
Which luxury with riches brings;
Of Helicon, no more I knew,
Than Madam S——r——gh's old ſhoe,—
Thoſe, who excel'd in lyric ſtrains,
Or lofty verſe ne'er plagu'd my brains:
I neither knew the books, or men, ſir,
From Churchill up to father Spencer.—

'Tis true, I care not now, who know it,
At court! I had not been a poet.—
Fly luxury, ye homely ſwains,
Riches and court diſſolve the brains,—

No ſooner from the height I fell,
Which you, dear Peter, ſung ſo well;
Inſtant appear'd a lovely maid,
Reflection call'd, and gave her aid:
Prudence, wit, ſenſe, and all the graces
Surround my head, and take their places:
So Icarus flutt'ring o're the ſeas,
Perceiv'd his judgment to increaſe;

And, e're he reach'd the liquid flood,
Knew what was right, and what was good.—
As heretofore, old poets tell us,
Magic could tame the braveſt fellows;
Incloſe a virgin in a tree,
Till ſome bold champion ſet her free;
The mind and memory ſuſpended,
Till the whole necromancy's ended;
The charm diſſolv'd, the aſtoniſh'd mind
Wanders through nature unconfin'd;
Starts as the new idea flows,
And wonders, whence the change aroſe.
Conceive me, Peter, on the floor,
Creeping in haſte to find the door;

Each fear accelerates pulſation,
Each ſtep excites a new ſenſation.—
The portal ſhut, I climb on high,
Anxious ſome picture to deſcry:
Where, ſafely lodg'd beneath the canvas,
I quickly hear whatever can paſs.—
O, what a ſcene of tumult rages,
Peers, princes, princeſſes and pages,
Without diſtinction ruſh together,
As citizens in rainy weather.—
Nay, to the palace utmoſt end,
The noiſe and uproar wild extend.—
Cooks, undercooks, with grooms of ſtable,
And kitchen boys, with faces ſable;

All,

All, all are rous'd, and where's the wonder!
For Cæsar's angry voice is thunder.—
So on Olympus towering height,
The gods and goddesses alight,
To Jove an humble prayer present,
To which the chuff denies consent;
Strait from the God's reproachful eye,
The vivid flashes angry fly;
He nods, the thunder's heard around;
Trees, mountains tremble at the sound.

I, who of late at court employ'd,
Under the crown a place enjoy'd;

What

What further paſs'd, by duty preſs'd,
Will ſafely lodge within my breaſt;
No muſe ſhall tempt me with her proffers,
At leaſt till freſh occaſion offers.—

Of court diſaſters tired, the muſe,
My fate with anxious thought purſues.
Now ſnug myſelf, my wife next care,
And offspring my attention ſhare.—
How oft I wiſh'd, while many a fear
Ruſh'd on my mind, and caus'd a tear;
That ſome diſaſter might not ſever,
My tender wife and me for ever!

Where

Where do my much lov'd offspring ſtray,
Far from their parent torn away?
Thus I exclaim'd; with horror big
When ſome hoarſe voice roar'd, *Wear a wig.*
As when ſome partridge wings her flight,
The tube preſented to her ſight;
Skims o're the corn to ſeek her brood,
And draw them to the diſtant wood;
But e're her young delight her eyes,
The balls arreſt her as ſhe flies;
Thus was I ſtruck! the ſentence dread
Drew vengeance on each Louſe's head.
" Unleſs ſome glorious revolution,
" Each Louſe prepares for execution:

" When

" When combs ſucceeding combs divide
" The parting hair; and forfex wide
" Without reflection, fear or dread,
" Lays waſte the glories of the head;
" The poliſhed blade to theſe ſucceeding,
" What Louſe alive, aſleep, or feeding,
" Can then eſcape? the briny flood,
" With ſurge white foaming ſcours the wood,
" Where thick and deep, each Louſe demure
" Retired, and deem'd himſelf ſecure,
" The caſtle this, on great occaſion,
" When barbers threaten'd an invaſion.
" My wife, my offspring now muſt bleed,
" And every Louſe's death ſucceed.

" With

" With her ſhrill trumpet tell-tale fame,
" Through all the city will proclaim,
" What's done at court, from thence by poſt,
" The ſtory's carried round the coaſt:
" All heads are ſhav'd and the curs'd faſhion,
" Spreads univerſal through the nation."——

Thus to myſelf, I read this lecture,
Trembling, and pale behind the picture.

The troubled waters now ſubſide,
As after flowing, ebbs the tide.
Flown are the gueſts, and flown the meat,
And meek ey'd peace aſſumes her ſeat.

Thus, on the Atlantic, Fame can tell,
And Gallia's ſons, perhaps as well;
When Britain all her thunder hurl'd,
Triumphant, o're the weſtern world;
While groans of death, and ſhrieking cries,
And ſhouts of vict'ry rend the ſkies;
She ſpake, and bad wild uproar ceaſe,
" Thunders be ſtill;" and all was peace.—

By duty, chance, or fancy led,
Hither her way a matron ſped.
Her right hand poiz'd in elevation,
A bruſh, the emblem of her ſtation;

Her left, a flag of linen cloth,
Fatal to ſpider and to moth,
Unfurl'd; not Juno in her gait,
March'd with a more majeſtic ſtate.—
Then round the room her eyes ſhe threw,
Anxious each ſpider to ſubdue:
But wiſely e'er ſhe ſtarts her game,
Reſolves to renovate her frame;
And from her ſide with cautious fear,
Obſerving, if the coaſt be clear,
A vial ſmooth of choiceſt Nantz
She draws; but firmly with both hands
Holds to her lips, leſt the rich booty
Might tempt one ſingle from it's duty;

And overcome by ſtrong temptation,
Might not ſoon re-aſſume it's ſtation.
Ah! vain, dear Peter, vain the force,
T'oppoſe dame nature in her courſe;
Reaſon o'recome, like jockey thrown,
The flying courſer ſpeeds alone;—
In vain reſtrain'd by both her hands,
The vial now uplifted ſtands;
And drain'd of all it's valued ſtore,
Tho' hug'd and preſs'd, would yield no more.—
Then on a ſofa ſoft reclin'd,
The powerful opiate ſooths her mind;
At length o'recome by ſleep profound,
She ſinks in ſweet oblivion drown'd.—

" O bleſt occaſion! golden hour!
" That fortune gives into my power,"
Quick I exclaim, " the k---'s decree,
" Affects me not, and I am free!
" Nature abhors ſuch ſlaviſh laws,
" And aids the perſecuted cauſe;
" To act deſpotic ſtubborn ſtill,
" Tho' k---, l--ds, c-m--ns paſs the bill;
" A ſubject's caſtle is his houſe,
" Whether a chamberlain, or Louſe."
This ſaid; my ſpirits now I rally,
And from my covert 'gan to ſally;
Then, maſter Peter, near deſcended,
I deem'd my troubles almoſt ended:

Acroſs

Acroſs the room I ſteer my way,
And on the matron's veſtment ſtray.

" May I once more my wife embrace?
" Behold again our little race?
" Granting they heard the dire decree,
" 'Tis not impoſſible, but we
" May meet again; for helter ſkelter
" They might have flown for place of ſhelter;
" And in ſome corner quite obſcure,
" Till fit occaſion laid ſecure:
" Ah! fond deluſive hopes," I cry'd,
" Can the gods grant it? and I ſigh'd:—

Hope

Hope thou ſeducing pleaſing power,
Preſaging ſtill the proſperous hour,
Aided by thee, we ſtem life's tide,
And caſt each ſlaviſh fear aſide!

Now by forc'd marches up I climb,
The hills and craggy ſteeps ſublime;
Through vallies deep explore my way,
Impervious to the light of day.—
Virgil's Æneas went to hell,
But where I went the muſe can't tell:
Yet after thouſand dangers paſt,
I reach'd the capital at laſt.

Quite

Quite tir'd with labour, pain and fear,
I ſought a ſafe aſylum here;
Heedleſs of cenſure and of praiſe,
With Mrs. Bruſh, to end my days.—

How changeable are earthly things?
As every poet truly ſings.—
Not long at court your friend remain'd,
Fate, Peter, otherwiſe ordain'd.
Poor Mrs. Bruſh from court was ſent,
I with her into exile went.
Her crime was, as at court 'tis ſaid,
Her hand too often reach'd her head.

But

But hold! for while I live in clover,
I'll praiſe the bridge, that I go over;
While I remain with Mrs. Bruſh,
I value courtiers not a ruſh,
With her abuſe ſuch paltry things,
As princes, pages, crowns and k---s.—

Ah! maſter Peter, one bliſs more,
The gods had for your friend in ſtore.—
Here too, I ſwear upon my life,
I found my children and my wife.—
What ſparkling joy roſe in our faces?
What rapture in our warm embraces?

Our mutual hiſtories we told;
How 'midſt misfortunes, great and bold,
In martial acts came off as handſome,
As Elliot, Hercules or Sampſon;
Attentive hear each other's glory,
And with our kiſſes cloſe the ſtory.—
Ah! what domeſtic bliſs and pleaſure!
Did men like *us*, enjoy this treaſure;
No bloody act would mankind ſtain,
But earth be paradiſe again.—

How vain the wiſh! whilſt little things,
Can rouſe the ſpleen and wrath of k--s;

Whilſt

Whilſt I, a Louſe, can raiſe ſuch wonder,
And make them roar like peals of thunder.

One prayer to heaven I now preſent;
Oh! may it not refuſe aſſent!

When k---s ſhall ſtorm, croſs'd in their wiſhes,
About their knives and forks, or diſhes;
When they like ſtubborn children cry,
Friſk, fume and fret, they know not why;
Or when ſome little wand'ring Louſe,
Shall next approach the royal houſe;
Forgetting;—k---s are God's appointed;
And dare to touch the Lord's anointed;

May they not ſtretch this raſh decree,
And bring a ſecond curſe on me;
Nor be ſo ſtupid, when they rave,
To doom the *other ſex* to ſhave.
Then ſafe, dear Pet! for k---s a ruſh!
I'll live and die with Mrs. Bruſh!

F I N I S.

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